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REPORT
OF
THE TRUE STATE OF THE
COW POX EXPERIMENT,

At the Close of the Year 1809,

BY

Mr. JOHN BIRCH,

SURGEON OF ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

An Account of some Cases of Failure at Cheltenham,

ON PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN VACCINATED

BY DR. JENNER.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY SMEETON, 17, ST. MARTIN'S LANE:

AND SOLD BY CALLOW, CROWN COURT; AND COX, BOROUGH.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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REPORT on the State of VACCINATION and the three Institutions created to support Cow Pox, at the close of the year 1809.

THE original Cow Pox INSTITUTION, established to investigate the merits of the experiment, under the direction of Dr. PEARSON and others, has published various statements, in which it has been asserted, and proved, that Vaccination is not to be relied on as a certain preventive of Small Pox.

Reference

The ROYAL JENNERIAN SOCIETY, for the Extermination of the Small Pox, of which Dr. JENNER was President, is extinct.

No. 1

The LONDON VACCINE INSTITUTION, or the Rev. ROWLAND HILL's Cow Pox Society, under the direction of Dr. WALKER, soliciting the donations of the charitable, and advertizing by hand bills delivered in the streets, and in various other ways, for patients,—still lingers in existence.

2

The doubts created in the public mind by the sophistry of the *Report of the College of Physicians*, and the alarm excited by the masses of cases in which the experiment has failed, in different parts of the kingdom, have induced Parliament to institute a NATIONAL VACCINE ESTABLISHMENT, at the public expence, for the purpose of distributing genuine Cow Pox matter, and investigating all accounts relative to Vaccination.

In a Report published by the Board of this Establishment, on some of Dr. JENNER's cases, they seem disposed to continue the system of deception so long practised by the late Jennerian Society.

3

The incorrectness (if so mild a term be admissible) of this Report, as proved by the written testimony of the sufferers themselves, and the evidence of two respectable medical gentlemen, should point out to Parliament the improbability of ascertaining a truth by making it the interest of the investigators to persist in error.

By these cases, and many others which have been since published, the boasted *infallibility* of the great DISCOVERER of Vaccination has been annihilated, and the prediction of the Opposers of Cow Pox, that Dr. JENNER's patients would share the fate of those of other Vaccinators on the occurrence of an epidemic Small Pox,—has been verified.

It is a fact, affording much room for comment, that Dr. JENNER, was just admitted to the Directorship of the National Vaccine Establishment, when the Small Pox broke out at Cheltenham, and the cases alluded to occurred; that he immediately relinquished his appointment; and has not since appeared at Cheltenham, the former seat of his Summer residence, and the principal scene of his Vaccine practice.

It has likewise been lately *discovered*, that although Dr. JENNER was so fully *convinced* of the *infallible security* Vaccination afforded to others, he was not quite satisfied that it would prove equally efficacious in his own family. *He therefore, with true parental caution, inoculated his own child with Small Pox matter.*

These circumstances being developed,—but not by the candid confessions of the Vaccinists,—some of the most confirmed *believers* in the mysteries of Vaccination are become *sceptics*.

The prevarication of the Cow Pox Reporters, when Small Pox happened after Cow Pox, has been so often

exposed that the public are no longer misled by them. Formerly such cases as were, on account of the virulence of the disease, allowed to be indisputably Small Pox, used to be represented as having been *imperfectly* Vaccinated, and such as were admitted to have been perfectly Vaccinated by Dr. JENNER himself or his disgraced agents, were said to be Chicken Pox, or some *hybrid* eruption, until Inoculation from such cases proved those suppositions to have arisen from *Ignorance or Design*. 6

It is now merely contended that Vaccination *mitigates* the virulence of subsequent Natural Small Pox; but even the slender hope, here held out, of protracting the experiment, is extinguished by numerous fatal proofs of the fallacy of the doctrine.

The members of this new Cow Pox Establishment were so shy in the circulation of their Report on Dr. JENNER's cases, that scarcely a copy was distributed in *London*. In the Country it was imagined that it would produce some effect, and might escape the perception, and consequent animadversion of the Opposers of Vaccination. On the appearance of this Report, however, at Cheltenham, an able reply to it was made by Dr. JAMESON, which sunk it into deserved contempt.

The printed directions of this Society positively contradict the Report of the College of Physicians, and the absolute assertions of all former writers on the subject.

By them we were informed that the Cow Pox virus was perfectly innocent, and that no disagreeable consequences ever resulted from the puncture; that the operation was quite simple, and might be performed by clergymen or *ladies*.

Here it is admitted that too much inflammation may arise, and that *foul ulcers*, and *obstinate sores* may ensue. We are likewise led to conclude that the operation requires such great nicety, and so much experience, that it is

impossible the *improved* practice, even were it successful, and ever be extended so wide as to be productive of benefit to the community at large. No less than *six* causes, which may render the operation ineffectual, are circumstantially detailed.

As early as the year 1800, rumours which had a tendency to prejudice persons against Vaccination were so common, that fifteen Physicians, and twelve Surgeons, of eminence, beside others, thought it necessary to sign an advertisement,—which appeared in the *Morning Herald*,—assuring the public “that those persons who had had the Cow Pox were perfectly secure from the infection of the Small Pox.” When this assurance is contrasted with the numerous authentic cases of the failure of this preventive, which have since been published, it will appear incumbent on these *experienced practitioners*, either candidly to confess their error, or to disprove the facts, and publish a satisfactory defence of Vaccination. 8

The recurrence of Medical Men to the tried, and successful practice of Inoculation, in many parts of England where epidemic Small Pox has proved the futility of Vaccination, the * present torpidity of the National Cow Pox Establishment, the solemn silence of the College of Physicians on the subject, the secession of respectable characters from the cause; and the extinction of the hireling writers who were retained to defend Cow Pox, together supply ample evidence of the hopeless state of the experiment; whilst the subject, like the Institutions, would be lost to remembrance, if those few individuals, who have been so basely stigmatized for maintaining their original sentiments, did not conceive it right to assert the solidity of

* Since the first impression of this Report, some papers have been circulated from the Cow-Pox Establishment and from the Octagon Chapel, representing the aversion which now so generally prevails, against this delusive and mischievous experiment.

their opinions, and to convince Parliament, and the public, how grossly they have been imposed on.

In respect to the state of the experiment in Scotland, it must not be forgotten that at a very early period the University of Edinburgh was so fully assured of the utility, and security of Vaccination, that the honorary degree of Doctor in Medicine was conferred on the *Discoverer* of this blessing.

Among the medical practitioners in that part of the United Kingdom, the belief in the efficacy of Cow Pox has been so general, that the universal adoption of it must have been retarded by causes totally unconnected with the influence of anti-cow pox doctrines;—some inherent defects in Vaccination, have become manifest to the people of Scotland.

Until the late eventful year, the Vaccine doctrines and practice met with no opposition; but at length the Universities, and Cow Pox Societies, have been thrown into consternation by the *heretical* opinions, as they considered them, of Mr. BROWN of Musselburgh. This candid and experienced practitioner has published a liberal confession of the entire failure of the experiment in his own practice; and adduces upwards of fifty selected cases, Vaccinated by himself and others, in support of his present opinion, “that Vaccination cannot be relied on as a *permanent* security against Small Pox.”

A paper has been published in London, under the title of “*Annual Report of the Cow Pock Institution, Dublin.*” But the matter therein contained, varies so much from the original Report of the Dublin College of Physicians, wherein it is said that, “The Small Pox is rendered a much less formidable disease in this country *by the frequency of Inoculation* for it, than it is in other parts of His Majesty’s

“ dominions, where prejudices against Inoculation have prevailed ; hence parents, not unnaturally, objected to the introduction of a *new disease*, rather than not recur to that with the *mildness* and *safety* of which they were well acquainted,” that great doubts are entertained by some persons of its authenticity.

When the Vaccine Frenzy was at its height in England, repeated attempts were made to blend the praises of Vaccination with the ceremonies of religion ; and from recent circumstances it must be inferred that this idolatrous disposition is not quite extinct.

In Scotland, likewise, the defence of Cow Pox against Mr. BROWN's publication, commenced from the Pulpit. The cause here met with a champion in the Rev. Dr. LEE, whose arguments, like those of the Rev. SIDNEY SMITH on this subject, are founded on the *unanimity of opinion*. Although no reflecting and philosophic mind can be satisfied with general conclusions drawn from such premises, yet, the sentiments of Dr. LEE on one point seem so just, that they appear to form an appropriate termination for this Report.

“ *This unanimity,*” says the learned Writer, “ *of their testimony, if shewn to be delusive, must reflect the greatest disgrace on the Profession. It must have proceeded from universal stupidity, or universal dishonesty, and a species of dishonesty of unprecedented folly and enormity ; foolish because its exposure must ruin their popularity, and enormous because it must in all probability sacrifice the lives of thousands.*”

“ *If it proceeds from credulity, the criminality is not diminished. The obstinacy of persisting in a detected error is a proof of weakness and moral depravity almost as decisive as the commission of a wilful mistake.*”

JOHN BIRCH,

Surgeon St. Thomas's Hospital, Lonon.

REFERENCES.

1. *vide* Reports of this Society.
2. Circular Letter of the London Cow-Pox Society, dated April 6 1809, &c. &c.
3. A Report published by the National Cow-Pox Establishment, dated July 20, 1809, and signed James Moore, Assistant Director.
4. Medical Observer for September 1809, No. 24; and Dr. Jameson's Letter in Cheltenham Chronicle, dated 22d August 1809.
5. Cases in Medical Observer of July, and several succeeding numbers
6. Reports of the Royal Jennerian Society for Exterminating Small Pox, on the Failures at Ringwood, Cambridge, &c. &c. &c.
7. The printed Instrument of the National Cow-Pox Establishment, under head of Probable Causes.
8. Morning Herald, 19th July 1800.
9. Brown's Inquiry into the Anti-variolus Powers of Vaccination, published at Edinburgh.
10. Paragraph in Morning Post, January 1810
11. Edinburgh Journal 28th August, 1809, and a Sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Lee for the benefit of the Cow-Pox Institution at Edinburgh.

These Reports and Directions may be had from
Mr. MURRAY, Secretary to the National Establishment in Leicester Fields.

REFERENCES

1. The Reports of this Society.
2. Circular Letter of the London Cow-Pox Society, dated April 6 1800, &c. &c.
3. A Report published by the National Cow-Pox Establishment, dated July 30, 1800, and signed James Moore, Assistant Director.
4. Medical Observer for September 1800, Vol. 21; and Dr. James's Letter in the Edinburgh Medical Journal, dated 25th August 1800.
5. Cases in Medical Observer of July, and several succeeding numbers.
6. Reports of the Royal Jennerian Society for Ex-terminating Small Pox, on the Evidence at Kingwood, Cambridge, &c. &c.
7. The printed Testimony of the National Cow-Pox Establishment, under head of Probable Causes.
8. Morning Herald, 19th July 1800.
9. Brown's Inquiry into the Anti-variolous Powers of Vaccination, published at Edinburgh.
10. Paragraph in Morning Post, January 1810.
11. Edinburgh Journal 25th August, 1800, and a Sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Lee for the benefit of the Cow-Pox Institution at Edinburgh.

These Reports and Directions may be had from Mr. Blount, Secretary to the National Establishment in Leicester Fields.

APPENDIX.

BOARD ROOM OF THE NATIONAL VACCINE ESTABLISHMENT, LEICESTER-SQUARE.

July 20, 1809.

AMIDST the numerous authentic Reports which are transmitted to the Board of the National Vaccine Establishment, from all parts of the Empire, describing the great success and extension of the practice of Vaccination, accounts have also been received of a *very small number of failures*.

Most of these failures have occurred at such a distance from town, or so long after the event, as to preclude a proper investigation; and some of those which could be investigated, were found to be misrepresented, and the history of others was destitute of *sufficient proofs*. But in May last, a letter was addressed to the Royal College of Physicians of London, by Dr. Jameson, of Cheltenham, in which he relates three cases, where the small-pox occurred, though the *patients had been vaccinated by Dr. Jenner* some years before.* This Board having thought proper to desire me to investigate these cases, the following is the result of my enquiry.

It appears, that the two first cases were only examples of that slight variolous affection, of the warty kind, which

* Twenty-five cases *sufficiently proved* were sent from Cambridge by Sir Isaac Pennington, a *Fellow of the College of Physicians*, many months before this; but, hitherto, no Report has been made on these cases, nor the least notice taken of them by the President and his assistants, though presented by such high authority.

has been termed by some writers, the *secondary* small-pox. The occasional occurrence of such an eruption, both after the small-pox and the vaccine, has been often described and commented upon by Dr. Jenner, and other writers. There was nothing therefore in these cases to make them be considered as failures.

The third case was that of Charles Dodeswell, who was stated to have been vaccinated when an infant by Dr. Jenner, and four years afterwards to have contracted the confluent small-pox in full virulency. Upon investigating this case, I find that this child was *really* inoculated for the vaccine, by Dr. Jenner, but that instead of a regular vaccine pustule having been produced, and proceeding properly to its termination, the part inflamed prematurely and violently, and was unusually long in getting well. In fine, this was an instance of that irregular malady which was always declared by Dr. Jenner, not to be depended upon as a preventive of the small-pox. It is fully described in the Instructions promulgated by this Board; and the causes are there mentioned which commonly appear to excite it. It is to be regretted that when such irregularities occur in the progress of vaccine, it is often difficult to induce the parents to have the operation repeated. From this obstinacy* the life of the child above-mentioned was brought into great danger.

It is clear from the above account that instead of these cases being failures, they were only *instances of peculiarities* with which we have been long acquainted. Indeed the utility of the Vaccine has been displayed in a very striking manner by the effects of the epidemic small-pox, which has lately raged at Cheltenham. For this destructive disease

* Vide Dr. Jameson's letter in contradiction to this assertion.

has proved fatal to several of those who rejected this innocent preventive, while thousands who had been vaccinated have continued in perfect health, though surrounded with the contagion of small-pox.

JAMES MOORE, ASSIST. DIRECTOR.

*To the Board of
The National Vaccine Establishment.*

Printed by order of the Board,

J. HERVEY, M. D. REGISTER.

[The following Evidence, respecting the same cases, is so directly in contradiction to the whole substance of this Report, that a great want of integrity must be somewhere. The Reader will make his own comments.]

Testimony of Ann Dodeswell, Mother of the Children mentioned in the Report of the National Vaccine Establishment.

I declare that three of my children, Charles, Thomas, and Ann, were vaccinated by Dr. Jenner about four years ago, and by him pronounced safe. And that they have all three, lately, to the best of my knowledge (of the disease) had the small pox. Charles had the disorder so bad, that his life was despaired of.

I took him to the Doctor, when his arm was in its worst state from the cow-pox inoculation, who so far from shewing any anxiety about it, *assured me the pock was very fine*, and that my *child was perfectly safe*.

I farther affirm, that there did not appear to me to be any difference between the arm of this child and those of

my other children who were vaccinated ; and I positively deny that it was more painful, or longer in getting well than the arms of the others. The truth of what I have here said, I am ready to confirm by oath.

The mark ✕ of ANN DODESWELL.

Witness to the above,

GEORGE BROWN.

August 18th. 1809.

Testimony of Mary Fluck, who nursed the Children above alluded to.

I declare that Mr. Wood and Mr. Thomas Pruen came to Mrs. Dodeswell's, about a month ago, when she was from home. On being questioned by them respecting Mrs. Dodeswell's son, Charles, having been vaccinated about four years ago, by Dr. Jenner, I said that I was witness to the child's having had the cow-pox, and that I had never seen or heard of any difference in this child's arm from those of the others, who had the disease, and that it regularly got well. They then wished to see the arm, which I complied with. They then observed, that the mark was *larger* than it ought to be, and it could not have been the right cow-pox. This, to the best of my knowledge and recollection, was the whole of the conversation which passed on the subject.

The mark ✕ of MARY FLUCK.

Witness to the same,

GEORGE BROWN.

August 18th. 1809.

To the Editor of the Cheltenham Journal.

Sir,

As a friend to justice, and the impartial promulgation of truth, you will please to communicate to the public the following letter on the report of the three cases of vaccination, inserted in your last weekly paper.

Although, as a Member of the College of Physicians in London, I transmitted to that respectable body, three cases of vaccination, performed at Cheltenham, by Dr. Jenner, which were considered by *several medical practitioners on the spot*, to be proofs that the practice of vaccination was not a permanent security against small-pox infection in all cases, yet it never was my wish that they should have been made the subject of public animadversion.

I certainly am not, as some persons have inferred from Mr. Moore's report, inimical to the experiment of vaccination being completely and fairly tried; on the contrary, I was a principal agent in introducing the practice into the Finsbury Dispensary, in London, and published a series of resolutions in favour of vaccination, while Physician to that Charity. But the *defective report* of Mr. James Moore, Assistant Director to the Board of Vaccine Establishment, must injure the cause it was intended to support, and its industrious promulgation in the newspapers, by a resident practitioner in Cheltenham, does not permit me with justice to myself, to remain silent upon this occasion.

I have not been able to discover that any person was sent from London to investigate these cases, but Mrs. Dodeswell affirms, that two gentlemen belonging to Cheltenham made enquiry about her child, since the period of my letter; one of whom is known to have written a treatise in favor of vaccination, and the other is a Surgeon in Cheltenham, *who vaccinates for Dr. Jenner*. Their investigation could not,

therefore, be more *impartial* or more accurate than the one I made, by noting down the particulars which occurred in the progress of the diseases, and transmitting them to the College, *while the morbid appearances still existed.*

The reporter says, "The two first cases were only examples of a slight *variolous* affection of the warty kind, termed by some writers, *secondary small-pox*, and cannot be considered as failures." These very expressions, according to the usual acceptation of words, would lead us to a conclusion different from that of the reporter. But we have incontestible evidence of their nature, from two children passing through the regular stages of a severe small-pox, in consequence of inoculation from the variolous affection. These inoculations were performed by two different practitioners, and were distinctly stated as leading features of my letter to the College, *but which are intirely omitted in Mr. Moore's report.*

The third case is acknowledged in the report to be a virulent small-pox, succeeding to *irregular* symptoms of vaccination. The parents, however, say, that the vaccination being considered *perfect*, a repetition of the operation was never suggested, and I think it an unfortunate plan, to circulate widely a printed report that vaccination, in the hands of the Discoverer, who must naturally exercise the greatest caution, has, in this instance, failed.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOMAS JAMESON.

Cheltenham, Aug. 22, 1809.

Cheltenham, 12th. Aug. 1809.

Sir,

I HAVE seen Mrs. Dodeswell, the mother of the children whose cases are noticed in the report of the Vaccine Establishment. She informs me, that when her son Charles, the subject of the third case, was under vaccination, she herself took him to Dr. Jenner, *when his arm was in its worst state*, who, so far from expressing the least anxiety about it, said that it was a *very fine pock*, and assured her that the child was *perfectly secure*. She is very positive in asserting that the arm of this child was not more painful, nor longer in getting well, than the arms of her other children, who were vaccinated.

I learn from Mrs. Dodeswell, that the only *investigation* which has been made was by Mr. Wood, Surgeon, of this place, and Mr. Pruett, *not a medical man!* who came to her house, when she was absent, and made some inquiries of a young woman, her relation. This young woman I have likewise seen.

She says that, in reply to the questions of these gentlemen, she told them, that she was witness to this child having had both diseases; and, that there was nothing different in his arm, at the time he had the Cow-pox, from the arms of the other children who had it, and, particularly, that *it was not longer in getting well*.

The other two cases were seen by Dr. Jameson, as well as myself, who is witness that I inoculated from the mildest, and produced small-pox, in two instances, in rather a severe degree. No notice is taken of this circumstance in the report. It was, *before I inoculated from it*, by some persons said to be a case of chicken-pox.

